



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

NEWS RELEASE

SNAKE RIVER BASIN OFFICE

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PUBLIC HEARINGS SCHEDULED ON PROPOSAL TO RECLASSIFY GRAY WOLF

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will hold two public hearings in Idaho on its proposal to change the legal status of gray wolves under the Endangered Species Act. The public hearings will be held on Tuesday, Oct. 31, in Boise, and on Thursday, Nov. 2, in Idaho Falls. Comments will be taken from 1:00 p.m. until 3:00 p.m. and again from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. Participants can register beginning at 12:30 p.m. There will be a court recorder and hearing officer present to record statements made by the public.

The Boise hearing will be held at the Grove Hotel, 245 S. Capitol Blvd., and the Idaho Falls hearing will be at the West Coast Idaho Falls Hotel (formerly Cavanaugh's on the Falls), 475 River Parkway.

"Public hearings are an important part of our decision-making process," said Bob Ruesink, the Snake River Basin Office supervisor. "We give people who would rather make oral comments a chance to give us information on our proposals, and we record their remarks so they can be given the same weight as written materials that are submitted."

The successful wolf reintroduction program in the northern U.S. Rocky Mountains and robust gray wolf populations in the upper Great Lakes area prompted the agency to propose to reclassify the species from endangered to threatened in some parts of the country, and to remove the species from the federal endangered species list in some other areas where there are no wolves and it is unlikely there ever will be. The proposal was published in the Federal Register on July 13, 2000, and public comments will be accepted until Nov. 13, 2000.

Six informational meetings were held on the proposal in locations around the Pacific Northwest in August. At those meetings, agency staff discussed the proposal, answered questions, and explained how the public can most effectively comment on it during the public comment period. Staff also will be available at the hearing locations to answer similar questions.

Comments or information concerning the proposal may be also mailed to: Content Analysis Enterprise Team, Wolf Comments, 200 East Broadway, PO Box 7669, Room 301, Missoula, MT 59807. Comments may be submitted by electronic mail to: graywolfcomments@fws.gov. The subject line of all electronic mail submissions must read: "Wolf Comments." Comments may also be submitted by facsimile to 406-329-3021, with the subject: "Wolf Comments." All comments must include the name of the person submitting them in order to be considered in the final decision. All comments, data and information must be received by Nov. 13, 2000. All comments and materials received will be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the address above and at other Fish and Wildlife Service locations. More information on the proposal can be found on the internet at <http://midwest.fws.gov/wolf> or by calling the Service's gray wolf information line at 612-713-7337.

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 93-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses more than 530 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 66 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.